

Tampa Funcoast

Area Of Narcotics Anonymous

Clean Times



813-879-HELP
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FUNCOAST HELPLINE

September—October 2012

www.tampa-na.org



What A Great Time Aboard the Super Queen!!

InSide

Fear of the Fourth p. 2

Anniversaries p. 3

*Women Bridging the
Gap p. 4*

*Florida Region Ranks
6th p. 4*

Forgiveness p. 5
Choices p. 5

*We Made It To Three
p. 5*

Fish On! p. 6

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FEAR OF THE FOURTH

I wanted to do the fourth. I had a hunch – rather, knew as clear as two and two is four – it was my emotional mess that kept me an active addict. I knew that it was self-hate and deep shame that formed the way I lived; anything like ‘better’ would have to radically re-orient my relationship to self and world. People are scared of the fourth step. I’d be lying to say that I wasn’t. But I wanted to do it, too. In the way you want to have chemotherapy, I suppose. The gangrenous limb removed.

I didn’t necessarily know if it would work, or what I would look and feel like if I did manage to come out the other side. But I knew this strung together bit of sobriety I had would crumble if I didn’t attempt the fourth step post-haste. I heard about the fear, the procrastination, the dread and I understood it. But I knew I was a walking time bomb. The slightest provocation, the first taste of depression or anxiety or visit from fear would have me sneaking into a dope hole or liquor store with sirens and bells and whistles inside, a need so big I’d tremble like a leaf. I knew this. The sirens inside were normal. The need, that shaking, was hardly metaphor. I was a girl who held onto walls.

I wasn’t afraid of having to show these secrets to some-

one. I knew most addicts would take my stuff in stride. I knew, intellectually, that my sins were neither unique nor spectacular. I wasn’t afraid of what other people thought of me – I didn’t really give a f*@k. And I figured if it was going to be a private thing, a quiet notebook, a hushed conversation when it got to the conversing part – and for the most part the world wouldn’t know or care. I wasn’t scared of the sharing. I was scared that the telling, the being honest about it all, might cause me to finally and truly fall to pieces. To be ruined. To be destroyed.

Of course, the argument ran, I was already damaged. I was already sick. It was the not telling that was keeping me sick.

I thought of vertigo. There is an ambivalence to the thing. It is one of those odd phenomena of the mind. It is simultaneously the fear of falling and the urge to fall.

And I realized how little I knew. I knew I denied and hid from my own inner experience. I knew, in a general, grocery list kind of way, what it was I had to look at. But I had no idea what opening myself to feeling those things would do to me. In early sobriety, the panic started to grow. I started to remember things, and I started to realize how many days and nights and oddly, whole periods of months from childhood on, were absolutely unavailable to my consciousness. I had no f’ing clue what I’ve done. I had no idea what might come up if I tried to answer the simple ‘what happened? And then?

And then?’. Oh glory be. I have hell inside of me.

Most of my life I had unconsciously suspected that to feel them would be unlivable.

Coping skills aren’t simple. We take them up because they work. We continue to use them because they work. We adapt. We respond to a threat, a slight, or a fear because we can’t handle the threat or the slight or the fear directly. We may continue to use the coping skills even after they don’t work so well any longer. We use them even if they do as much to self-harm or self-hinder as they do to limit the perceived threat. It doesn’t matter. The threat is big enough that we’re willing to do a little self harm. We’re willing to take the consequences. We’d rather hurt than run that risk. Humans do this. We respond to the unlivable by shutting down, turning it off, focusing elsewhere, because we literally cannot take in or face the truth. We deal with stress in much the same way. We refuse.

I knew that I was killing myself. But drugs/alcohol were a coping skill. The way I saw it, the drugs/alcohol were the one thing I had that kept me together, just as much as it was tearing me apart. I survived by having a storehouse of things willfully decided to not think about, yet(ever); a black market corner on secrets I never intended to tell anyone and never wanted to think about again; I had a glut of minor memories that were so far from being processed or integrated or worked

through and healed from they were not even mentionables in my conscious self-dialogue. I am a hard girl. I chose to be hard. I got harder and harder. I had the black suspicion that to look at my real feelings, my facts, my truth would be altogether too much. I wouldn’t be able to handle it. I might die. I might, just might, go insane. I was facing a cliff of consciousness. I suspected the drop, the depth; I had some hunch as to all that was unconscious and inarticulate and dead in me.

I thought of vertigo, and I thought of black magic. Voodoo. Exorcism. Ghosts. Looking in had all the threat of a ouija board. I had no way of knowing what I was about to invoke and no clue how powerful it would be or what it would do.

I was consciously playing with a thread that had been unconscious for years: you will be ruined, destroyed. You will be undone. You will be so dark, so ugly, so profane, you will be unloveable. You will no longer make any sense to anyone. Your insanity will be obvious.

I wanted to do it, this tidy looking ladder of steps that so many people swore by. Like; simple hammer and nails, On/Off switches, Recipes and arithmetic.

I promised myself suicide if it should hurt too much.

Addicts – or at least I – am insane. Suicide is not supposed to be a comfort. Not a sweet promise. But it was.

-Karin B.

Anniversaries September & October

A New Way

Rob N. 10/7/2010

Addict Salvation

McArthur C. 9/11/2006

Brandon At Noon

Josh M. 9/28/2009

Wes C. 10/15/2010

Breakfast Club

Al M. 9/5/2010

Choices

Wes C. 10/15/2010

Daily Recovery

Ariel M. 9/30/2009

Ira J. 9/7/2010

John J. 9/24/2009

Molly C. 10/28/2010

Robert W. 10/20/2000

Scott . 9/29/2009

Stephanie J. 10/19/2004

Vicky P. 9/11/2006

Emergency Room

Adrian P. 9/11/2010

Carlene N. 10/20/2004

Dan P. 10/28/2010

Jerald T. 10/31/2008

Kim C. 10/25/2010

Marina E-K. 10/03/2009

Mark N. 9/15/2011

Randy F. 9/15/2009

Ron F. 9/15/2000

Thomas S. 9/19/2011

Freedom From Pain

Ashley 9/19/2011

Ashley 9/19/2007

Kelly B. 9/13/1975

Happy Hour

Jerry T. 10/31/2008

Robin S. 10/5/1997

High Lie

Bobby B. 10/31/2009

Brad W. 10/7/2009

Brian B. 9/2/2005

Bruce M. 9/28/2007

Bryce M. 9/28/2007

Butch S. 9/21/1996

Cory D. 10/3/2005

Dominic B. 10/26/2009

George B. 9/20/2003

Harmonie S. 9/17/2009

John H. 10/4/2007

Juan L. 9/27/2007

Roxanne A. 9/21/2001

Tina R. 10/20/2004

Hope In Lutz

Bob R. 9/15/1995

Eric K. 9/9/2006

Hope In Recovery

Ira J. 9/7/2010

Zimmie J. 9/23/1996

Hyde Park NA

Jan B. 9/2/2010

Philip G. 10/10/2004

Phillip G. 10/4/2004

In The Middle

Jay M. 9/17/2010

Kelly C. 9/25/2006

Mark M. 9/29/2008

Paulie B. 10/24/2007

Ralph F. 10/24/2006

Keep The Faith I & II

Willie M. 10/3/2007

La Ultima Parada

Norman P. 10/24/1996

Live Or Die

Dominick M. 9/7/2007

Midday Meds

Jim H. 9/18/1989

Terence B. 9/12/2008

More Hope I & II

Clayton F. 10/22/2003

Cleo M. 10/31/1997

Shana D. 10/29/1999

NA 180

Brent S. 10/5/2010

Lindy M. 9/1/2010

Monte B. 10/4/2007

Norman P. 10/5/2010

Norman P. 10/24/1996

NA At The Nook

Luis M. 10/21/1998

NA Speaker Meeting

Cooper T. 9/5/1996

New Beginnings

Fred S. 10/15/2008

New Bite Of Serenity

Jonee A. 9/3/2003

Joshua S. 10/17/2011

Matt M. 10/25/2009

Richard H. 10/2/2004

Vincent R. 9/22/2006

New Life

Connie W. 10/6/2001

New Tampa NA

Gin 10/19/2008

Parrot Pirates In Paradise Group Of NA

Jack R. 10/3/2011

Quest For Serenity

Tonda M. 9/6/1991

Radical Recovery

Albert S. 10/31/2007

Don D. 10/31/2007

Joe D. 10/5/2000

Kimbra S. 9/28/2005

Nate M. 10/11/1996

Recovery Central

Mat K. 9/24/2009

Renegade Recovery

Kim C. 10/25/2010

Kurt K. 9/5/2006

Norman P. 10/24/1996

Tommy K. 9/14/2007

Rise For Recovery

BJ J. 9/28/2010

Honeree J. 9/27/2005

Michelle F. 9/6/2008

Michelle L. 9/6/2008

Squeaky Clean

Jimmy F. 10/22/2010

Sunset At Sunrise

Hank M. 9/6/1992

Luis M. 10/18/1998

The Heights Of NA

Matt M. 9/1/2011

The Message

Kurt K. 9/5/2006

The War Is Over

Creighton R. 10/12/2005

Derek T. 9/8/2008

Karen D. 10/2/2010

Kerri M. 10/21/2009

Maggie S. 10/21/2008

Wes C. 10/15/2010

The Women's Recovery Room

Kim H. 9/9/2011

Together We Can

Fernando S. 9/20/2006

Triple M

Felix C. 9/1/1997

TTNA

Gilbert O. 9/21/2001

John S. 10/20/2008

Kimbra S. 9/28/2005

Mary F. 9/28/2005

Uptown Tue & Fri

Gary C. 10/31/2010

Women Do Recover

Lydia B. 9/18/1988

Women Of Serenity

Dawn D. 9/24/2009

Tammy W. 9/20/1993

Yvette D. 9/17/2007

Women Stand United

Zimmie J. 9/23/1996

Women's Hope

Allison M. 10/2/2008

Chastity F. 9/5/2005

Crystal B. 10/25/2009

Deb C. 9/1/1984

Heather B. 9/29/2010

Women Bridging The Gap

In mid-August, the Clean Times very own Ira M. conducted an interview with Bay2Bay committee member Naomi.

Who is Bay2bay?

Bay2Bay is a diverse group of recovering women who embrace the principles of Narcotics Anonymous. We welcome women from the Bay area to join us in our plight for recovery and carry our message to the still sick and suffering addict.

What is the purpose of Bay2Bay?

Bay2Bay's primary purpose is to share our experience, strength, and hope in the hopes to unify all women of Narcotics Anonymous. To do this we want to utilize women from different backgrounds to motivate, empower, and support other addicts. We intend to address the challenges and to revel in the victories of women in recovery.

How did Bay2Bay come to be?

Several women were discussing some of the highlights of tradition one, "Our personal recovery depends on NA unity." It was clear to the women that our unity is strengthened when we participate in each other's recovery.

How diversity enriches our fellowship is by providing new and different methods to help the addict still suffering, or even the addict yet to come. The women

were able to identify that spending time together at picnics, dances and conventions helps build unity and provide opportunities to develop social skills.

Further discussion produced that Atlanta and Chicago have successful yearly NA conventions for women entitled "A Lil' Girl Grows Up." They felt that the Bay Area would benefit from something similar. After brainstorming what we would call ourselves, we agreed on Bay2Bay. From there, we sought women who shared the same vision and wanted to volunteer their time to help formulate a committee. It's amazing when standing upon a favored principle how things will come together. We then connected with the Brandon-based group "Women Do Recover" who agreed to sponsor our committee. With the help of many, Bay2Bay has become a reality.

Where does Bay2Bay meet?

Bay2Bay meets the first Sunday of every month at Brandon Christian Church, 906 Bryan Road in Brandon, FL 33510 from 3pm to 5pm.

Any past events that Bay2Bay have put on?

Bay2Bay first event was on November 25th 2011. It was a Thanksgiving dance at the Brandon Recovery Club. Now, looking back, we can see the challenges and the progress that has been made when putting on events.

Since then, we have hosted a Pretty in Pink and Boyz to Men fashion show. On July

21st we had a successful deep sea fishing trip which was a blast. Then on August 4th we had our first women's Speaker-fest. Women from all around came to share their stories with us. Old friendships united and new friendships established. This was a very powerful event, which made all the hard work well worth it.

Any set dates for upcoming events?

Our calendar includes a Sisterhood brunch, a Dinner cruise and a Christmas fashion show. All events serve as fundraisers to sponsor the 2013 Bay2Bay Women's Convention.

If anyone is interested in any upcoming events please contact our activities chairperson Phyllis (610-633-7579) or Sheryl B. (813-785-0545).

Florida Region Sixth Largest Worldwide In Weekly Meetings

According to a survey published by NAWS, the world's suffering addict has no shortage of meetings in which he or she may attend. Last May, there were more than 61,800 weekly meetings on this planet.

Still, there are countries without weekly meetings. Eastern Europe and the Middle East each has about 1 country without weekly meetings and in Western Europe there are about 5 countries without weekly meetings. There are at least 20 nations on the African continent without any weekly meetings.

This doesn't mean, nor is it confirmed by this author, that the above mentioned nations doesn't have meetings; only they are documented as not having any weekly meetings. For example, some of these countries may have meetings only once a month.

It reminds us that addiction persistently wreaks its devastation throughout society despite political, cultural, class and geographical differences. The identifiable characteristics of addiction simply doesn't change and nor should the clarity of our message in the rooms.

The following is how some of the survey's numbers add up:

- With 1,015 weekly meetings, the Florida Region ranks a close 4th in the United States (the Carolina region ranks third with 1,020).
- The Florida Region ranks 6th in weekly meetings worldwide.
- The South Florida Region ranks 11th nationwide with 680 weekly meetings.
- Alabama/Northwest Florida Region ranks 19th nationally and 26th in the world.
- There are 68 regions in nationwide and 205 regions in the world.
- Iran ranks first worldwide and has 18,195 meetings each week which is just under 13 times the number held by second ranked Northern Cal Region with 1,400 meetings.

Source: NAWS News, Vol. 10, Issue 1, August 2012, www.NA.org

—Funcoast Clean Times Staff

No One Has Ever Done Anything Too Bad To Be Forgiven. –Ruth

Sheppard

*I have spent so many years
hanging on to the things I have
done and what has been done
to me.*

Resentments keep us sick.

*A heart filled with resentment
is in turmoil and yields an
embittered soul.*

We cannot love as we should.

*The inability to forgive turns
our hearts cold and denies our
Higher Power's ability to warm
us and work through us.*

*I learned to forgive in order to
be set free.*

*Only through forgiveness can
we live a life of love and peace
and serenity.*

*Pray for those that have
harmed you; ask your Higher
Power to help you forgive them.*

*Pray that they become whom-
ever they were intended to be.*

*Pray to learn to forgive your-
self.*

We are not our past.

*We are not bound to exist in its
shadow.*

-Deborah N.

Choices

*Between us there are two
separate lives reaching for a
choice, Two separate walks
of life yet finding the same
voice,*

*A spoken word, a glance, a
friendly gesture, Something
upon which our tired heart
measures,*

*Trust is a virtue we have
both long let go, Replaced
with uncertainty that we
have both come to know,*

*But the show must go on, so
we adapt, we overcome,
And we lose ourselves in the
process with the people that
we become,*

*No more will we settle, we
strive to achieve, Yet our
prize is not glory, its pain
and deceit,*

*No tears of joy, just broken
and spiritually dead, All
while tucking ourselves in
the beds that we've made,*

*Pity runs deep, a slave we
may stay, But there's always
the choice to live another
way.*

*My past does not define
me...
Today I choose to live.*

–Gary M.

We Made It To Three

*When I was 90 days clean
I was diagnosed with hep-
atitis C. After talking with
my doctor about treat-
ment options, we (and by
we, I mean he) decided
that it would be best for
me to undergo 48 weeks
of interferon treatments.
Being new to recovery I
had learned that honesty,
open-mindedness, and
willingness were impor-
tant. So I told my doctor
that I was scared, but
that I would try. After all
of the "preliminary pro-
cedures" I was given the
meds and the green light. I
wasn't quite sure how this
was going to go, but I had
shared in meetings and
talked with other recover-
ing addicts about it. I am
beyond grateful for the ex-
perience, strength, hope,
and most importantly,
honesty that my predeces-
sors shared with me. But
nothing could have pre-
pared me for the next 11
months. I ached, I cried,
I didn't cry, I ate, I didn't
eat, I gained weight, I lost
weight, I slept, I didn't
sleep, I hated everything,
I isolated, I was sick all
the time, and I was de-
pressed like never before.
Every motion I had to go
through to "feel normal"
felt like a chore, but I went
through them.*

*I went to meetings
(in my PJs a lot of the
time), I shared, I called
people, I made gratitude
lists, I worked steps with
my sponsor, I PRAYED.
The depression didn't
go away, but doing the
things I was taught to do
in recovery kept me push-
ing through it. Even at
the worst of times, when
I just wanted to give up,
someone would share
some hope with me, and
I knew that there would
be an end to the pain I
was in. And then there it
was! The 48 weeks ended
(FINALLY!!) and slowly,
a feeling of normalcy
started to creep back into
my life. I started to smile
wider, laugh louder, and
I even started wearing
real pants again. But the
thing I am happiest about
is that I didn't have to
use, no matter what! As
I sit here typing this, the
clock on my computer
says October 3rd, 12:01
am. Today we celebrate
3 years clean—and not to
mention Hepatitis free—
but these accomplish-
ments are not my own, we
as a whole fellowship did
this, and for that, NA, I
thank you.*

-Marina E-K



Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will eat for the rest of his life!!!



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